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DEFINES CONSTANT-FLOW METHOD OF SOVIET PRODUCTION

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/This article explains the difference between two methods of production which have often been assumed to be identical./

The first characteristic of constant-flow (potochnyy) production is the detailed division of labor within an enterprise and the breaking up of the production process into the simplest operations, which promote more rapid and complete mastery of operations by each worker.

The second characteristic of the constant-flow method (potok) is the fixing of each operation at a specific location.

The third characteristic is the distribution of working positions in strict conformance with the progression of the technological process. This means straightening out the path of the workpiece during its processing and eliminating superfluous and return movements.

The fourth and most characteristic feature is the continuity of the production process; that is, the consecutive movement of the workpiece from one working position to the next, without stops or interruptions. This can be achieved by extensive and efficient use of various types of transport methods. Transport methods, including the conveyer, are a very important factor for constant-flow production. However, it is not correct to identify the conveyer with the constant-flow method, as has often been done up to now. The constant-flow method can be effective in many branches of industry without the use of an expensive conveyer.

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There are constant-flow methods in which parts are not transported at all. For example, a building under construction, a ship, or large machine can be manufactured with continuity by shifting the working positions.

Finally, the fifth characteristic of constant-flow production is its rhythm. This means the uniform spacing of operations. For this, the order of work and working positions must be so established that all operations will be synchronized; that is, their duration must be either equal in intervals or in multiple proportion of intervals.

For example, if in machining a workpiece, one operation takes 12 minutes, the next one, performed by another worker, takes 16 minutes, and the operation of a third worker, only 5 minutes, this work can be made rhythmic by means of various changes in technology and organization of production, so that the first operation will be performed in 10 minutes and the second in 15. Thus, the rhythm will comprise 5-minute intervals.

/The constant-flow method is similar to that described under "Fordism," Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, Vol 58, Moscow, 1936, p 131 ff; and "Mass Production," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol 15, Chicago, 1947, p 39 ff./

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